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ABSTRACT

Despite the strong association between women educators and young children, a chasm exists between "education feminism" and early childhood education. This paper explores why this chasm exists, and offers ways in which the two fields can be brought together. The relationship of feminism and early childhood education is explored, using history as a frame of reference. The evolution of feminist thinking about young children and their education is examined, as is the development of the field of early childhood education. The paper concludes by calling into question the hegemonic domination of developmental psychology, the theoretical foundation upon which early childhood education is built, and suggests that feminist theory and epistemology could provide a viable foundation for a new vision of early childhood education. The paper argues that the unification of feminism and early childhood education would benefit both fields. Contains 50 references. (AS)

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The Distance Between Feminism and Early Childhood Education: An Historical Perspective

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Introduction

Ask anyone to describe the typical teacher of young children, and their description is likely to be of a female teacher. Although this is a stereotype, it is very accurate: recent data indicate that 84.06% of all elementary school teachers and 99.02% of all pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers are women (Bergmann, 1986). Yet despite this strong association of women educators and young children, a puzzling chasm exists between "education feminism" (Stone, 1993) and early childhood education. When feminists write about issues related to teaching and learning, a topic often referred to as feminist pedagogies (Bezucha, 1983; Culley and Portugues, 1983; Fisher, 1987; Maher, 1987a and 1987b; Schneidewind, 1983; Shrewsbury, 1987; among others), they refer almost exclusively to post-secondary education, the education of adults by adults. Similarly, the educators who draw upon feminist theories to guide their practice are generally those who work with adult learners. In either case, for the most part, young children and their teachers are not visible.[1] The inside cover of the most recent issue of *Radical Teacher*, a journal devoted to feminist and other

[1] A good deal of very important work has been done by researchers--feminist and otherwise--on sex roles and gender stereotypes in the classrooms of young children. This body of literature could certainly be labelled feminist, but it tends to be situated outside the field of education feminism, an arena bounded by feminist theory, epistemology and criticism. As a result, it will not be considered directly in this paper. Readers interested in pursuing this topic could turn to the work of Vivian Gussin Paley (1984), Eleanor Maccoby (1974), or Barrie Thorne (1986) as good starting places for further inquiry.

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emancipatory pedagogies, illustrates this problem: "Elementary and Secondary School Teachers -- Write Articles, Please!" it begs, hoping to broaden the focus of the publication. At the same time, early childhood educators are beginning to realize that feminism and other critical approaches to knowledge and inquiry might have direct relevance to their work with young children (for example, Kessler and Swadener, 1992).

The separation of education feminism and early childhood education feels artificial, awkward. The two fields seem like logical and natural partners. I begin this paper by exploring the relationship of feminism and early childhood education in the United States using history as a frame of reference. I examine both the evolution of feminist thinking about young children and their education, and the development of the field of early childhood education. I suggest reasons for their current isolation from each other, and offer ways in which the two can be brought together to benefit both fields.

On Definitions and Labels

Both "feminism" and "early childhood education" are somewhat slippery terms that tend to be used in many different contexts with many different meanings. Although I hope to make connections between early childhood education and feminism, I realize that not all early childhood educators are women, nor are they all feminists. I do not intend to create rigid categories or to exclude any interested early childhood practitioners. In fact, it is difficult and problematic to use the word feminism at all, as if it were a monolithic entity rather than a blanket term that encompasses many different and equally valid feminisms. It is necessary to make clear what I mean by the term feminism, and

by the term early childhood education, and say a few words about how they will be used in this paper.

First, both terms have their generic definitions. Feminism, it would be generally agreed, is a social movement that intends to call attention to the oppression of women and, ultimately, to put an end to it. The field of early childhood education, according to The National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987), encompasses both the custodial care and the education of children from birth through age 8. These generic definitions will be used throughout the paper whenever I am speaking historically or generally on these two topics.

At other times, however, these terms will have more specific, and more personal, meanings. I acknowledge the validity of the generic definition of feminism. However, in my view, not all work that deals with women's inequality in society is feminist, and not all feminist work deals directly with women and oppression. My personal definition of feminism, the one that colors my work and informs my thinking, dives deeply into recent developments in feminist theory and epistemology, and is rooted in my own experience as a mother, a woman, a scholar, and an early childhood educator. I define feminism as a critical academic perspective that values ideas, positions, and ways of knowing and thinking that have traditionally been considered female: caring, emotion, intuition, connection, interdependence, for example. This working definition of feminism is decidedly and deliberately transformative, but is not hostile or oppositional. Like any good early childhood educator, I aim to include, not exclude. This definition of feminism will be most clearly operationalized in the sections of this paper dealing with feminist curriculum theory.

In many ways, education itself is an act of care giving, regardless of the age of the students. In the field of early childhood education, however, it is

impossible to tease apart the twin strands of education and care, especially with the youngest children. The staff at my infant son's day care center refer to themselves both as teachers and as caregivers with little distinction: the fieid has even coined the neologism "educarers" (Gerber, 1979) to represent the interwoven nature of these responsibilities.

In terms of history, philosophy, and focus, however, the issues of day care and education are somewhat more distinct. In the late nineteenth century, when early childhood education was taking root in America, two distinct perspectives emerged. One, generally referred to as the kindergarten movement, emphasized the education of young children and sprang from a German tradition. The other branch, the day nursery movement, focused on the custodial care of children whose mothers worked, and was inspired by the French creche model. Unfortunately, some of the terms used in the past tend to obscure specific details of the various programs, such as the ages of the children involved, the length of the school day, or the nature of the curriculum, and therefore make a full and clear understanding of the situation a bit more difficult. Despite these difficulties, I feel that I must attempt to separate the two. Availability of day care is already an important item on the agenda of many contemporary feminists: the separation of feminist thinking and young children is not a problem in this particular facet of early childhood education. In this paper, I will be attending primarily to educational issues-- pedagogies, classroom practices, curricular decisions-- rather than to issues relating to the provision of custodial care, for it is in this aspect of early childhood education that the feminist presence is most sorely missed.

Introduction

Neither feminism nor early childhood education sprang forth in a vacuum. An examination of the history of these two fields provides background knowledge crucial to understanding the current separation of feminism and early childhood education. Many books have been written on American women's history, and on the history of early childhood education in the United States: this section intends to be neither. My purpose in this section is to analyze and interpret these histories in a way that will shed light on the liminal area between the two fields, and identify the places of intersection (or lack thereof). The historical overviews of feminist thinking about the education of young children and the field of early childhood education provided here are quite brief, but they provide the context necessary to understand the present relationship between the fields.

Women and Children First: Separate Spheres

Biology has inextricably linked women and children. The simple fact that only women can bear children has shaped the evolution and history of women's experience. Firestone (1970) even goes so far as to assert that women's biological link to reproduction is central to the oppression of women. The biologically linked facts of life are remarkably constant over time and across cultures: women carry and birth children, therefore women have the primary responsibility for providing child care (Freedman, 1992). Their mobility limited by their child rearing duties, women are held responsible for work performed in and around the home: food gathering and preparation, providing clothing for the family, tending to other forms of housework. Men, on the other hand, have freedom to leave the home and live their lives in public.

Greek history shows that by the fifth century B.C., the separation of life into public and private spheres had been institutionalized (Thompson, 1993). The public sphere, called the *polis*, was the world of men. Government, philosophy, trade, power all belonged to the *polis*. The private sphere, the *oikos*, encompassed hearth, home, and family. These two spheres were separate, and women were confined to the *oikos*. Though the *oikos* was the domain of women, women did not have full power there. Men had total authority over women, thereby ruling both the *oikos* and the *polis*.

The separation of human existence into public and private spheres has significant implications. First, participation in each of the spheres is not freely available to all.[2] Men are able to move in both spheres, but women are confined to the private. Second, the two spheres are not completely autonomous and equal. Men have absolute power in the public sphere, but women do not have absolute power in the private sphere, as the case of ancient Greece illustrates. Third, the activities performed in each of the spheres are not equal in power, status, or prestige. The work done by women is consistently devalued, a disturbing phenomenon that is visible cross-culturally (Rosaldo, 1974). Women's place in the private sphere limits their power, their influence, their potential for advancement, their education, the parameters and possibilities of their lives.

Historically, the only way for women to attain recognition and status from their work in the private sphere was by being good wives and, especially, good mothers. In seventeenth century Europe, Enlightenment thinkers began to suggest the value of education for women on the grounds that it would enable them to be better mothers. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), a work

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[2] Recent work by people of color, gay men, and the differently abled have reminded us that not all men wield equal power the public sphere. The notion of separate spheres is a useful heuristic that has some specific value in understanding women's history, but is clearly an oversimplification of a very complex issue.

often cited as the first feminist manifesto, Mary Wollstonecraft offered a scathing critique of contemporary sex discrimination. Though her work was considered extremely radical at the time, it still encouraged women to be wives and mothers: the separate spheres distinction remained unchallenged. The ideal of Republican Motherhood so prevalent in early nineteenth century America also revolved around women's role as educators of the next generation. Women were praised and idealized, but still constrained within the private sphere.

In 1848, several hundred women gathered in Seneca Falls, New York to discuss issues relating to women's rights. During this convention, American women decided to break out of the private sphere. The women wrote their "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions", a document modeled upon the Declaration of Independence, to call for women's equality in all areas of activity. This document had limited impact-- much reform energy went into abolition and temperance rather than the fledgling women's movement, and then the Civil War cast its long shadow over the nation-- but Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Seneca Falls women had exposed once and for all the essential inequity of the separate spheres argument.

The New Woman

In the early twentieth century, things began to change in white, middle class society, and a new woman emerged (Sochen, 1972). The spiritual daughter of the Seneca Falls women, the new woman broke out of the private sphere to work outside her home. She found work in factories, offices, schools. Though she was certainly freer than her mother and her grandmother had been, she was plagued by a problem unknown to them: what to do with her children when she left home to go to work.

The issue of children and child-raising was a complicated one for these new twentieth century feminists. It was generally agreed that "the bringing up of a child is the greatest creative work of the average man or woman" (Henrietta Rodman, quoted in Sochen, 1972, p. 30). No one advocated forgoing the opportunity to have children. However, it was also agreed that having to stay home to raise a child prevented women from fully realizing their potential as human beings. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the leading feminist theoretician and thinker of the time, claimed that men had kept women chained to the household, relegated to bearing children. Women could not develop their humanness until they were free to participate in all arenas of public life on equal footing with men. Children were, then, an obstacle to women's self-actualization.

Henrietta Rodman and Crystal Eastman devised an innovative solution to this problem. They suggested that mothering be collectivized. Child rearing, they asserted, requires highly specialized knowledge and skill. Most women do not have the requisite capabilities, nor even interest in acquiring them. A woman with well-developed child care skills could receive some additional special training and then become a professional mother, caring for her own children and those of other mothers. Calling this "intelligent mothering", as opposed to "instinctive mothering" (Rodman in Sochen, 1972, p. 30), Henrietta Rodman suggested that qualified and trained experts should be responsible for child rearing.

Rodman took this idea one step further in her utopian plans for an apartment house for professional women. She advocated collectivizing all domestic chores in order to free women from "the four primitive home industries: care of the children, preparation of food, care of the house and of clothing" (Rodman in Sochen, 1972, p. 49). Each of these tasks would be handled by professionals while the women went out to work. In the words of a

contemporary critic, the plan worked like this: "you put the baby and the breakfast dishes on the dumbwaiter and send them down to the central kitchen-nursery-kindergarten-laundry to be cared for until needed" (in Sochen, 1972, p. 51). Women, it was assumed, would spend an hour or so with their child each evening, and then be ready to dine with their husbands.

Rodman's ideal feminist was a middle class white professional like herself. Tied to her particular time and place, Rodman was aware of the women who were wealthier than she (not true feminists, in her view), but paid no attention to working class or immigrant women. For example, Rodman's plan does not concern itself with the lives of the "professionals" who will attend to the domestic chores in the building. Who cares for their children while they are at work? How much time will they have for fulfilling interaction with with their spouse and children when their working day is through? Despite its cultural tunnel vision, Rodman's plan is intriguing. Further, it is evidence of early feminists' commitment to the idea of early childhood education as a professional field of endeavor, one requiring specific expertise.

Feminism and Children

The work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Henrietta Rodman illustrates an essential point about feminism that relates directly to the purpose of this paper. Feminism, as it has evolved historically, is about women, and women's experiences. Feminism is about women making themselves heard, claiming what is theirs, taking care of themselves. Feminism is not primarily about children. In fact, children can be seen as a wrench in the works of feminism. Both Gilman and Rodman are clearly ambivalent about the place of children in a woman's life: children seem to be little more than a hindrance, a nuisance, a

biological urge. These two thinkers looked out at the world and saw women trapped by their children, forced to remain in the private sphere, and thereby denied their rights as individuals, thwarted in their attempts to grow as people. Though neither advocated childlessness as a feminist ideal, it clearly would make life easier.

Contemporary feminisms remain firmly focused on adult experience. Acknowledging the limiting and constraining nature of labels, it is possible to group recent feminist perspectives loosely into two broad categories: liberal and radical. Liberal feminist activity strives to enable women to achieve equality with men. Legislation to end sex discrimination, campaigns for equal pay, and the Equal Rights Amendment are all evidence of this type of feminist work. Radical feminist activity, on the other hand, eschews any comparison with men. Women and their experiences are celebrated and appreciated for their own value and worth, without using men as a reference point. Women's music festivals, the women's spirituality movement and much feminist scholarship could be considered examples of this perspective. Both liberal and radical feminist thinkers have grappled with issues related to child rearing and education, but these topics are generally fairly marginal, and tend to be rooted in an adult-centered perspective (Thorne, 1990). For example, Tyack and Hansot (1990) point out that much of the impetus behind the feminist interest in gender equity in elementary schools that began with a fervor in the 1970s stemmed directly from dissatisfaction with the status of adult women in society. In an attempt to alleviate a problem facing adult women, feminists looked to childhood to find the root causes. Again, feminism is primarily about women, not children[3].

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[3] Karen Offen (1988) suggests alternative defining terms: individualistic and relational. Though they differ from the terms liberal and radical, they are similar in their focus on adult women's experience.

When feminist theories are interpreted, translated, and applied to pedagogy, they retain their adult focus. Feminist education, rooted in the women's movement tradition of consciousness raising, is about adults educating themselves and other adults. Nothing inherent in feminist theory would prevent its pedagogical strategies from being used with children. But, as I said earlier, feminism is about women: children are simply not that high up on the feminist agenda. This would not be a problem were it not for feminism's transformative vision. Feminists, if it is possible to generalize about such a diverse group, aspire to improve the world, to make it a fairer, kinder, and more humane place for all people. Education, particularly of young people, plays a crucial role in social change. Feminist education cannot afford to ignore children. Given feminism's traditional respect for early childhood education as professional field, however, it seems possible that room could be made for young children under the umbrella of feminism.

The Foundations of Early Childhood Education

It is difficult to separate the history of early childhood education from women's history. For many centuries, women were the sole providers of education to young children, raising their own offspring and preparing them for adult life. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when early childhood education was transformed from a mother's obligation into a bona fide profession, the leading advocates and reformers were women.

The intellectual tradition upon which American early childhood education is based, however, is distinctly male[4]. Plato, writing in the fifth century B.C., is

[4] In Europe, on the other hand, women were more visible as intellectuals in the field of early childhood education. Maria Montessori and Margaret and Rachel McMillan are notable examples.

perhaps the earliest thinker to consider the importance of early childhood education. In his *Republic*, he wrote "You know that the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken" (Book II, Section XVII). Despite his professed interest in young children, Plato is not credited as the spiritual father of early childhood education. That honor has been bestowed upon Johann Pestalozzi, an eighteenth century Swiss man. Inspired in part by Rousseau's *Emile*, Pestalozzi developed an educational philosophy based on devotion and deep concern for the lives of young children. He established several different schools in his career, but was never able to articulate his beliefs. His German disciple Friedrich Froebel made this comment: "... [Pestalozzi] could never give any definite account of his idea, his plan, his intention. He always said, 'Go and see for yourself' (very good for him who knew *how* to look, how to hear, how to perceive); 'it works splendidly!'" (Froebel, quoted in Braun and Edwards, 1972, p. 61).

Luckily, Froebel knew how to look, how to hear and how to perceive. He was able to capture the essence of Pestalozzi's work and then build upon it, creating the first real early childhood curriculum. Froebel asserted that the preschool period is an entity in its own right, and should be a planned and articulated part of formal schooling. He did not, however, feel that the methods used in traditional classrooms were appropriate for use with young children. Early childhood was a period, he believed, that deserved to be respected in its own right, a period in which there was a wonderful unity between the child and the world. Froebel coined the term kindergarten early in the nineteenth century to describe the appropriate learning environment for young children. In the kindergarten, play was the proper vehicle for learning, and Froebel developed

an organized and structured curriculum that balanced the child's freedom with the demands of the content at hand.

Kindergarten in America

Although he certainly romanticized and sentimentalized childhood to a certain degree, Froebel's kindergarten was hugely influential. In fact, remnants of his work can be found in early childhood classrooms today: such pedagogical staples as interest centers, hands-on learning, and even "circle time" can trace their lineage back to Froebel. His philosophies and practices were imported to America in 1856 by Margarethe Schurz. Schurz was a German immigrant to the United States who was eager to give her young children and those of her German-born and German-speaking neighbors an educational experience like the one they would have received in Germany. She opened a small kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin, never realizing that her motherly decision to provide for her children would be the start of an educational movement.

The idea of educating young children was not new to America. Mid-seventeenth century Puritans often taught their children to read at very young age in order to enable them to read the Bible (Kaestle and Vinovskis, 1978). The early nineteenth century saw a small early childhood education movement inspired by Robert Owen's British infant schools (May and Vinovskis, 1977). Infant schools, generally funded by philanthropic organizations with the express social purpose of educating poor children, provided care and education to children as young as eighteen months of age. Primary schools existed in nineteenth century Massachusetts to teach children aged three to six (Kaestle and Vinovskis, 1978). And, in homes across the nation, wherever there were parents and their children, there was early childhood education. But the establishment

and eventual institutionalization of kindergarten was the first comprehensive and large scale effort to bring formal schooling to young children.

Kindergartens (also called nursery schools occasionally-- the boundaries between kindergarten, preschool and day care were not as clear as they are today) began by taking hold in larger cities. There were two varieties of early kindergartens, private and charity. Records suggest that both served children from the ages of three to five (Kaestle and Vinovskis, 1978). The first English-speaking kindergarten in the United States was private, opened in Boston by Elizabeth Peabody in 1860. The sister-in law of Horace Mann, Peabody provided a Froebelian experience for children of upper middle class families. Other kindergartens were opened as a form of philanthropy, much like Owen's infant schools. Run by churches and other social organizations, charity kindergartens aimed to provide a wholesome alternative to the streets for the children of the poor.

Slowly, by simply borrowing empty classrooms at first, kindergartens insinuated their way into the structure of public schooling (Snyder, 1972). Many kindergartners (the term used to describe not the students but the teachers) resisted this association. There was a jarring philosophical disjuncture between the Froebelian kindergarten and the rigid and regimented experience of first grade in a common school, and the teachers feared that the expectations and practices of the upper grades would contaminate the kindergarten. In 1873, the first public kindergarten was opened in St. Louis, but even its teacher Susan Blow had her doubts about its outcome (Snyder, 1972). But the movement had begun, and by 1898 there were public kindergartens in almost 200 cities in America.

In her book *Dauntless Women of Early Childhood*, Agnes Snyder writes "While some men spoke eloquently with feeling for young children, in early childhood education it was women who did the ground-breaking work" (Snyder, 1972, p. 14). The field of early childhood education was dominated by women: women taught in the kindergartens, women trained future kindergarten teachers, women headed up the professional organizations, women pushed for publicly funded early childhood education, women lobbied school administrators to consider integrating kindergartens into the structure of public schooling. Despite this strong female force, the theoretical ideas that fueled the further development of the field in the twentieth century were produced, like those in earlier years, by men.[5]

There was very little rigorous scientific theory underpinning the field of early childhood education up until this point (Braun and Edwards, 1972). Froebel, the main authority in the American kindergarten, based his work on his informal observation of children and his deeply held religious beliefs. He had a personal philosophy, but careful or scientific knowledge of children and their development, no theoretical notions about the purpose of schooling. Kindergarten was atheoretical. To further complicate matters, the turn of the century saw a huge influx of immigrants and a rapid rise in school enrollments. Early childhood education had its vision, it had its mission, it had its population, but it lacked a strong foundation.

Enter the Progressives. Progressive education was part of a broad social movement aimed at improving the lives of Americans as they grappled with the

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[5] It is somewhat problematic to separate theory from practice in this way, for it tends to devalue the practical and the intelligences that go along with success in the real world. The women leaders of early childhood education were certainly not non-intellectual. They did not do their work without thinking. However, they functioned outside the traditional realm of theory and ideas, and thought of themselves as teachers, not thinkers. It was not until recently that the voices of teachers began to be regarded as sources of theoretical authority.

challenges of urban-industrial life (Cremin, 1961). The most well-known and influential educational thinker of the progressive movement in education was certainly John Dewey. Dewey's educational philosophy seems to capture the best of Froebel[6]-- root education in the child's experiences, focus on the growth of the individual, respect the child's interests and instincts-- and grounds it in a firm philosophical tradition, enhancing it with rigorous thinking, complex and articulate ideas about schooling and democracy, and sophisticated language. Dewey's work gave the education of young children the status and recognition it deserved, and provided it with a strong and enduring philosophical foundation.

The Progressive movement also brought early childhood education a powerful new tool: science. Faith in the power and potential of science in education prompted Edward L. Thorndike to remark optimistically: "The education of the human child will sometime be treated with the respect and care that we now give to recording eclipses or measuring the brightness of stars" (1903, quoted in Bloch, 1987, p. 44). Around the turn of the century, psychologist G. Stanley Hall brought his work on child development to the attention of a group of 35 kindergarten teachers. 33 stormed out of the room halfway through his presentation, their Froebelian sensibilities severely shocked (Snyder, 1972). The two who remained were given a glimpse of the future of their field. Psychology was to become the bedrock discipline upon which early childhood education would be based. Psychology, like other sciences, provides definite, seemingly objective answers to thorny questions. The scientific approach appealed to early childhood educators. An excitement about science, efficiency and measurement was endemic at the time (Callahan, 1962). Relying on science

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[6] Dewey (1923) agreed with Froebel's emphasis on growth, but took issue with his devotion to abstract symbolism. Further, Dewey found Froebel's vision of development to be rigid and close-ended, too focused on a pre-determined end:-- an "Absolute Whole which is in the process of unfolding" (p. 79)-- rather than on the process of growth itself.

allowed early childhood educators to turn to experts for guidance and information. Knowledge of scientific findings gave early childhood educators authority, and enabled them to be viewed as professionals in child development, thus enhancing the status of the field as a whole (Bloch, 1987).

This interest in child development research led to the creation of many new kindergartens and nursery schools. Affiliated with universities around the nation, these demonstration schools and laboratory schools tended to focus on child development issues rather than pedagogical issues (Braun and Edwards, 1972). (This division holds true even today. Bing Nursery School, on the campus of Stanford University, is run by the Psychology department, not the School of Education.) The European-inspired kindergartens still existed, to be sure, but the field of early childhood had shifted away from their idealistic perspective to a more scientific orientation toward the education of young children. By the end of World War I, the term 'scientifically sound curriculum' was synonymous with 'legitimate' education (Bloch, 1987, p. 46). Psychology gained further influence in early childhood education with the advent of Freudian psychoanalytic theory in the 1930s. Freud's work gives great weight to the impact of early childhood experiences on future development and adjustment. Many early childhood educators, such as Caroline Pratt of the City and Country School in New York City, drew heavily on Freud's theories (Cremin, 1961).

Theories of Child Development and Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Developmental psychology has remained the driving force behind research and practice in early childhood education (Walsh, 1993; Bloch, 1992;

Kessler, 1991a)[7]. Its influence is profoundly pervasive. The alliance between developmental psychology and early childhood education is certainly not monolithic or uniform (Spodek, 1989a)-- the dominant conceptions reflect dramatically different viewpoints-- but when educational programs for young children are classified or described, it is generally the theories of mind and learning influencing the program that determine where any given program will be placed.

For example, Spodek (1977) refers to three views of human development that manifest themselves in early childhood education: behavioral-environmental, maturational-nativistic, and comprehensive-interactional. Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) use different labels-- cultural transmission, romantic, and progressive-- to describe the same three perspectives. The behavioral-environmental or cultural transmission model is rooted in the work of behaviorists such as Edward L. Thorndike and B.F. Skinner, and reflects the belief that the purpose of education is to enable students to acquire the specific skills and knowledge required for success in life and in our society. Skills are taught by direct or indirect means in programs espousing this viewpoint, and are often arranged in a careful, hierarchical progression of steps. Many Montessori-inspired programs reflect this orientation, as did many of the programmed learning models of the 1960s.

In direct contrast, the maturational-nativistic or romantic model embodies the belief that education and growth must come from within the child. Exemplified by the works of Rousseau, A.S. Neill, and Gesell, this view supports children developing at their own pace, unfolding organically and naturally.

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[7] Of course, there are women working in the field of developmental psychology. And many of them may consider themselves feminists. But, generally speaking, the women who work in psychology are constrained by and work within the traditional scientific paradigm, a paradigm rooted firmly in objectivity, neutrality, empiricism and other traits that characterize patriarchal forms of knowledge.

Educators in programs reflecting this orientation have no outcomes in mind other than to provide support for the spontaneous growth of their young students.

The comprehensive-interactional or progressive model, drawing on the work of Jean Piaget, is based on the notion that children play an active role in creating their own development. Children move through developmental stages as a result of active thinking about meaningful problems and challenges found in the world around them, and their psychological structures are reorganized with each problem solved.

This last model currently wields the strongest influence in the field of early childhood education, and is embodied in the phrase "developmentally appropriate practice" (Bredekamp, 1987). Developmentally appropriate practice, described in a widely influential position paper published by the National Association for the Eduction of Young Children (NAEYC) (Bredekamp, 1987) aims to take into account a child's developmental readiness for any particular task or activity. Teachers engaged in developmentally appropriate practice are sensitive to the particular needs of each child, and attempt to create a meaningful, challenging, responsive, and stimulating educational environment for all students, regardless of their location on the developmental continuum. Children are given opportunities to learn through direct experience and hands-on explorations, and to engage in the types of problem-finding and problem-solving that lead to growth and development.

The NAEYC standards for developmentally appropriate practice arose in response to the trend toward pushing the skills-driven academic curriculum of the elementary school down into the classrooms of the very young. This trend has its roots in the the academic achievement frenzy that followed the launch of Sputnik in 1957, and in the compensatory education programs (such as Project

Head Start) launched as part of the L.B. Johnson's War on Poverty in the mid 1960s. Expanding knowledge of child development, most notably Benjamin Bloom's (1964) assertion that half of an individual's intelligence can be accounted for in the first four years of life, added fuel to the fire of direct instruction for young children. The educational experiences that resulted from these influences, however, tended to have a profoundly "psychometric" (Elkind, 1989) flavor, and generally reflected a behavioristic or cultural transmission philosophy. Developmentally appropriate practice stands as a humane and sensitive alternative to "hurrying" children (Elkind, 1981): forcing academic activities-- worksheets, phonics drill, flash cards-- on children too young to benefit from them.

Though it sounds benign, developmentally appropriate practice has recently come under critical scrutiny. The first set of criticisms relate to practical applications of educational philosophy. For example, Spodek (1989b) asserts that developmentally appropriate practice does not address the most crucial of all educational questions: what knowledge is of the most worth? "What children need to know, or ought to know, is not determined by what children are capable of knowing", Spodek writes, pointing to an inherent limitation of the developmental perspective. Kessler (1991a) suggests that another practical weakness of the NAEYC position is that it does not set down any criteria for determining appropriateness, thus leaving the door wide open for all kinds of undesirable practices to sneak into the early childhood classroom wearing the label "appropriate". Jipson (1991) asserts that the NAEYC standards' strong focus on cognitive development separates cognition from affect: the NAEYC standards overlook issues such as care-taking and caring, interconnectedness, and mutual responsibility. This problematic and artificial separation of affect and

cognition does a disservice to young children: overlooking the development of affective capabilities limits a child's overall cognitive growth (Eisner, 1982).

The notion of broad universal stages of development upon which developmentally appropriate practice is based is a suspect one (Walsh, 1991), even in the field of developmental psychology. The implicit conception of children organically unfolding according to an unshakeable inner timetable casts early childhood educators as lame ducks, standing by and watching as the children develop appropriately. Further, developmentally appropriate practice causes additional difficulties for teachers. It stands as a monolithic entity, a rigid "how -to" that ignores alternatives, possibilities, and teachers' professional knowledge (Jipson, 1991).

The critics agree that developmentally appropriate practice also neglects larger issues of fairness and equity in the early childhood classroom. It does not ask the question, "appropriate for whom?" It ignores the full variety of developments and practices, and the ways that they interact: a Jewish child cutting out a Christmas tree might be engaged in an activity that is developmentally appropriate in terms of motor skills but inappropriate in terms of other types of development (Sapon-Shevin, 1993). Nor does developmentally appropriate practice take into account the cultural diversity of young children and their teachers: it represents the common assumptions and interests of the white middle class, and thereby privileges and values only a small spectrum of possible knowledge and ways of knowing (Jipson, 1991).

Its critics contend that developmentally appropriate practice may shortchange the children it intends to serve in other ways. One preschool teacher described the problem: "The teacher is the owner of the standards and 'knows' what is right and appropriate.... How does the teacher know the kids' life experiences?" (quoted in Jipson, 1991, p. 128). In this way, developmentally

appropriate practice can be as disempowering as the traditional academic curriculum that it intends to replace. Also, developmentally appropriate practice focuses its attention on what *is*, what already exists in the children (Kessler, 1991a). It pays no attention to what should be, or what could be.

The critics of developmentally appropriate practice take an extremely strong stand, one that casts a dramatically new light on the practices we have come to take for granted. I am intrigued by their critiques, and feel that much of their value comes form their potential to shock complacent readers. These critics have done us a service: it is important to re-think and re-evaluate our educational enterprises, constantly working to improve what we offer our children. I have no desire to reject developmentally appropriate practice, but the work of these critics has inspired me to think carefully about ways in which early childhood education could be enhanced and improved.

Feminism and Early Childhood Education

In a very real sense, early childhood education is a profession dominated by women: the ground-breaking work (and back-breaking-- ask anyone who has taught kindergarten how she feels after bending over those little tables all day!) has been done by women. However, the theoretical authority upon which the field is based has come from men. Presently, the theoretical foundation upon which early childhood education has been built, developmental psychology, has been called into question. Developmental psychology has had a hegemonic domination over the field of early childhood education. But, as Kessler (1991a, p. 193) writes, "what appears to be a debate between those who are well-informed by current research in child development and those who are not is, in reality, a debate between individuals who hold different values about the purposes of

schooling, what counts as legitimate knowledge, and presumably the nature of the good life and the just society." Many alternatives to developmental psychology could be proffered. The field is wide open.

Feminist theory and epistemology could provide a viable foundation for a new vision of early childhood education. Looking to education feminism for theoretical authority would give women a voice in a field that they dominate in silence. It would also serve to close the rift between feminism and young children that developed early in this century. Women and young children could be reunited, but in the public sphere, not the private. Forging a relationship between feminism and early childhood education would benefit both fields.

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